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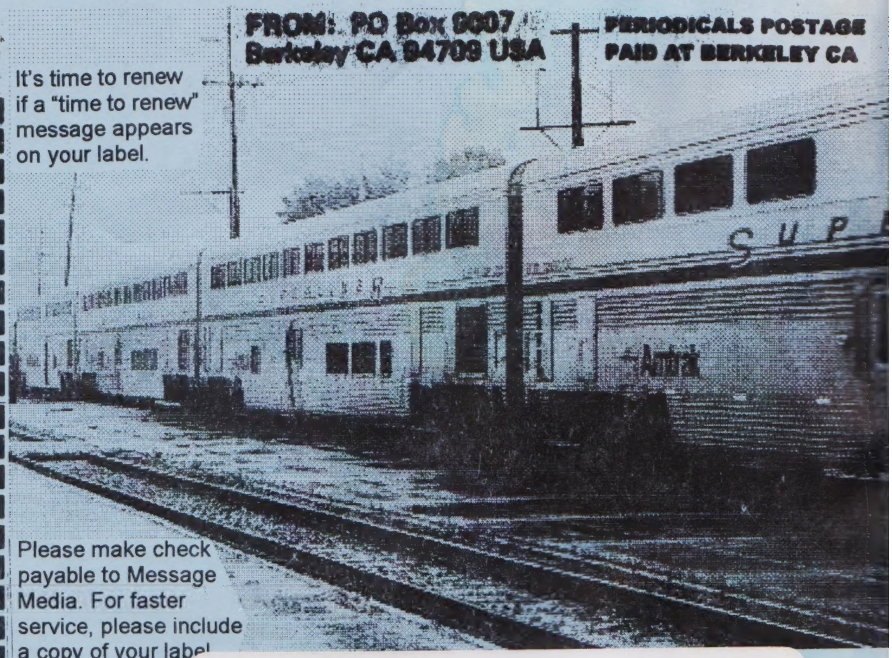

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APRIL 30, 2002

RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

- The Northern Spirit: Riding VIA Rail's *Hudson Bay*
- West to East Over the Amtrak Long-Distance System
- Amtrak Gets a New President

EAST COAST REPORT

Connecticut timetable notes: New Shore Line East timetable TT41 became effective Apr 8. The cover proudly states that NEW station at State Street (New Haven) will open in May. Trains times are all listed in the timetable at the new station. Train times are all adjusted for faster or "actual" running times. Mid-morning/early afternoon trains 3614-3663 have been discontinued due to low patronage. The Fri-only early getaway train 3626 and its express return, 3675, began running effective Apr 26.

Other observations are that SLE passengers with multi-ride tickets no longer have the option of riding certain Amtrak trains. These NEW reverse-express trains now depart New London at 6:45pm, 7:50 pm and 9pm. These are former deadheads and now accept paying passengers! The 9pm is a Fri-only train that runs right behind Amtrak 169 (which does not stop at Old Saybrook) and has a high peak fare. Don't ask me why it doesn't run Mon-Thurs.

Metro-North issued a New Haven Line timetable effective Apr 7 through Jun 23. Train 3614 with SLE equipment still departs Stamford at 9:30am, but it is planned to run this equipment back earlier so a quick turn in the station can be made. Currently, the equipment must go into the yards to lay over and then later return to the station. The afternoon equipment from New Haven to Stamford that formerly ran deadhead (turning to become through train 3640) is now a revenue train leaving New Haven at 3:28pm and stopping at Bridgeport, Fairfield, Westport and South Norwalk en route.

Other timetable notes: Metro-North issued new Harlem and Hudson Line timetables effective Apr 7-Jun 23.

New Jersey Transit issued virtually all rail and bus timetables effective "April Fool's Day", reflecting few schedule changes but major fare changes. The rail timetables have boxed schedules indicating that off-peak roundtrip tickets cannot be used to/from New York, Hoboken or both Newark stations. All shaded trains cannot be used by passengers with Transit ID (for "half-fare"—actually about 55% fare) tickets if they are age 62-64. Passengers 65 or over or who have a Medicare card (disability) cannot ride shaded trains INSIDE the box, but MAY ride the shaded trains (reverse peak) that are OUTSIDE the box. This whole thing is very confusing even looking at a timetable. Some trains runs are partially shaded, while the rest are not shaded. Looking at Boonton Line train 1085, the Hoboken departure of 6:54pm is shaded, while virtually all other stops are NOT shaded. In the same timetable, looking at the eastbound trains that are shaded, all Hoboken arrival times are NOT shaded. Does this make any sense?

In Grand Central on Apr 11 I had some spare time, so I decided to try the new ticket vending machines. They are very easy to use, and unlike NJ Transit's, there are no station codes to look up and then enter. Instead, one touches the screen indicating the first letter of the station and then all stations of that letter are shown and you just point out your station. I like these new easy-to-use machines. The LIRR uses the same type of machine.—Bob Underwood.

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ON THE COVER: Please see rear cover (page 24) for cover caption.

The ***Silver Meteor***, southbound train 97, derailed after striking a truck loaded with logs at a private grade crossing in Coosawhatchie SC at about 9:03am on May 14. The location is 35 miles north of Savannah GA. The train carried 103 passengers and 13 crew members. The engine and all 10 cars, including a baggage car, derailed but remained upright and in line. Amtrak said that nine passengers and two crew members had minor injuries, and that they were treated at local hospitals. Passengers from the train were taken to a local community center while arrangements to continue their travel were being worked out.

Passengers told local reporters that the crew acted well in keeping everyone calm. They said they realized that the accident could have been much worse.

Amtrak announced that it had sent a "customer care team" to the derailment site.

The Camden-Trenton light rail system now under construction is facing cost overruns, reported the NY Times (May 6). While the initial cost was placed at $604 million, the contractor is requesting an additional $140 million. The Times said that NJ Transit plans to resist paying the additional amount.

Amtrak announced May 7 that it is starting an *Acela* promotion to "encourage travelers in the Northeast to continue choosing *Acela Express*." It is giving Amtrak Guest Rewards in the amounts of 10,000 points for every three round trips in Business Class and 15,000 points for every three round trips in First Class. The promotion began May 7 and ends Jun 30. Qualifying travel is on the *Acela Express* between Boston and NY or Washington, and between NY and Washington. Travel to or from intermediate points such as Providence, New Haven or Philadelphia does not quality for the bonus points.

B&O Railroad Museum is celebrating this year the 150th anniversary of the Western Maryland Railway. On July 13 it will offer rides on the first mile of commercial track in America behind newly restored WM 236 F-7A, and engine built in 1952. The Museum is at 901 West Pratt Street, Baltimore.

B&O RAILROAD MUSEUM

From now through July 2003, the Museum is also celebrating the 175th anniversary of railroading in America with special exhibits, lectures, etc. The celebration will culminate in July 2003 with The Fair of the Iron Horse 175—a 10-day pageant of rare locomotives and a city-wide festival. For more info online, go to www.borail.org.

Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority's executive director Michael Murray will step down when his contract expires July 29. TrainRiders Northeast head Wayne Davis credited Murray with shortening the delays that came about during the long period during which the *Downeaster* was being created. Murray was head of the Authority since it began in 1995, and worked on the Boston-Portland ME rail passenger project for over 12 years. Davis said that this is a critical time for the *Downeaster*, as promoters want to extend service to other parts of Maine.

The train has been a success story. Through Mar 2002, a total of 85,249 passengers have used the service, paying $1.33 million for tickets. Service began Dec 15, 2001, and it has consistently exceeded ridership and revenue expectations.

Metro-North's on-time performance has been setting records. For April the figure was 98.5% on-time. That was the best April performance ever; the second best was 97.7% in April 2000. April was also the fifth consecutive month in which Metro-North operated at or above 98%. M-N president Peter Cannito called it a "very commendable performance", adding that "Results such as these require relentless focus, keen attention to detail, teamwork and leadership at all levels... We are setting new standards in customer service."

Alex Mayes.

The photo above shows the northbound *Twilight Shoreliner* as it slowed for the stop at historic Williamsburg VA on April 12, 2002. The station there was built by the C&O Railroad in 1935 for their many passenger trains on the route. The *Twilight Shoreliner* has been providing overnight service between Newport News VA and Boston, carrying one Viewliner sleeper. GE P40-8 unit no. 800 shown in the photo is the "Class Unit" of the P40 series, and was originally assigned to the *Auto Train* when Amtrak purchased it in 1993.

Amtrak has decided to drop the sleeping car on the *Twilight Shoreliner* because of its shortage of sleepers due to unrepaired cars from accidents. The last train with sleepers leaving Boston was on Sunday, May 19, and the last one heading northbound was on Monday, May 20.

Before 1997, Amtrak called the train the *Night Owl*. Sleeping car service on the Boston-Washington route (and later extended by Amtrak to Newport News) has been available since the 1930s.

Rail advocates immediately decried the decision to drop the sleeper. The sleeping cars reportedly enjoy a 62% occupancy rate and the train is regarded as a very convenient way for business travelers and others to make a morning arrival in the major cities on the route. But Amtrak's James Weinstein, a senior VP for the NE Corridor, told reporters that when more sleepers are available, the cars could be restored to the train. He said that he thought people are going to miss the service.

Photo by Alex Mayes.

***Downeaster* ridership figures** for April are in, showing the increasingly popular train chalked up a record month, with 29,628 passengers riding the Boston to Portland service. It was the highest month since the train began operation in Dec 2001, and it also brought record revenues of $443,077, according to the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority. Officials are expecting that the service will surpass its ridership and revenue projections for its first year. They said that most passengers on the train use it for its entire length, between Boston and Portland or vice versa. Reportedly Amtrak will add a fourth car to train consists because of increasing demand.

Amtrak and Pennsylvania will share 50-50 the costs of upgrading the Philadelphia-Harrisburg Keystone Corridor. They signed an agreement for the $140 million project, which will be formally celebrated on Jun 11 in Harrisburg. All-electric service is supposed to return in the 5-year project, and trip speeds are to improve.

Amtrak spent $511,000 advertising its *Acela Express* in 2001, reported the NY Times. Rival Delta shuttle spent $33,000 in the same period, but now the ad wars are heating up. Both Delta and US Airways have been losing business to Amtrak. Also, a general drop in business travel has hurt the airlines. One of Amtrak's new outdoor ads reads "What's the point of a mobile phone if you can't use it while you're mobile?"

Amtrak is leasing six Amcoaches and two Amcafe cars to the Long Island Rail Road for the summer beach season on the Montauk line.

An Amtrak train at 3pm on May 26 struck a trespasser on the tracks near New Carrollton. All trains between Washington and Baltimore in both directions were cancelled. Trains from the north were halted at the next station in most cases, and in mid-route on others, until 7:10pm, when southbd trains began to be turned at Bal-timore to become northbd passenger extras. The *Three Rivers* from Chicago to NY was used as a local between Phila & NY because it was the only Amtrak train running. Most Phila & NY passengers went to SEPTA and NJT because there was no word on when service would resume.

The Washington Metro Board may vote to allow music to be played in the subway. Metro has been one of the few subways to declare it illegal. Said the Washington Post, "The rules typify a transit system built by an Army general, famed for its cleanliness and orderly operation and patrolled by police who once arrested a 12-year-old girl caught eating a french [sic] fry."

The Metro directors are moving ahead on their project to extend rail to Tysons Corner and Dulles Airport, a $3.3 billion project.

New York officials told Congress in April that they need over $7 billion to properly rebuild the transportation system in Lower Manhattan, destroyed by the terrorist attacks. The amount is four times greater than the White House's estimated figure. The $7 billion would not only rebuild destroyed infrastructure, but also make enlargements and improvements: relocate the PATH commuter train terminal; build a new subway hub at Fulton Street; redesign the South Ferry terminal; and create numerous links among subways, ferries and buses. Officials hope to use money allocated for disaster clean-up for the transportation projects.

A young couple apparently committed suicide May 13 in Elizabeth NJ by walking onto the tracks in front of a fast-moving Amtrak train and locking themselves in an embrace before they were struck and fatally injured. The couple was said to be addicted to drugs.

The media noted that it was one of six pedestrian deaths on NJ tracks in an 11-day period. Some were suicides and some accidental.

Washington Metro's new cars now being built are expected to be delivered by Apr 2003, 10 months later than the original schedule. The problem-plagued car construction should benefit from the opening of a second assembly plant, in Elmira NY, to speed up production. CAF, a Spanish firm, is building the 192 cars, and it has submitted a bid for Metro's next order of 68 cars along with Alstom Inc. and Breda.

Metro has obtained three portable towers to use in parking lots for police surveillance in an effort to deter auto thieves.

The Boston Globe on Apr 28 published a fine trip report on the *Downeaster* in its travel section, entitled "Right on track. A trip on Amtrak's Downeaster train is more about the journey itself than how fast you get there."

The Boston MBTA filed a new environmental report May 15 on its proposed Fall River and New Bedford commuter rail line. Its cost estimate has risen from $410 million to $669 million because of a 2-year construction delay. The projected year of completion is now 2007. In 2005 the Boston-Scituate Greenbush line should be in operation, MBTA said.

The *Acela Express* continues to gain passengers, and according to data released in April is now equal to Delta and US Airways in patronage. Amtrak said that after Sep 11 ridership jumped from 96,000 in Aug to 201,000 in Oct, and after receding somewhat were over 200,000 again in Feb. Amtrak said ridership on the high-speed trains was 5.5% above projections for this fiscal year.

***Downeaster* service to** Old Orchard Beach ME will not happen this summer because of an inability of passenger train officials to reach an agreement with Guilford Rail Systems on leasing land on which to build a station.

Columnist Brian McGrory in the Boston Globe Apr 12 wrote a negative article about riding the *Acela Express*, finding the train not fast enough to suit him. He called Michael Dukakis, who assured him that in 3-4 years the trip time would be reduced to "three hours or less."

RAIL FANTRIPS

Jun 13: Mass Bay RRE annual banque: Nandee's. 98 Market St. Lynn MA. Spkr: Michael Dukakis, Atk vice-chmn. 6:30pm. Two blocks from Lynn sta of MBTA Eastern Route. $21-23. Mass Bay RR Enthusiasts, Box 96, Pea-body MA 01960. www.massbayrre.org

Jun 15 or 16: Milwaukee Challenger. UP domeliner, 3985 world's largest operating steam loco. Jun 16 trip added. Coach seats only. 6/15 sold out. $169. W. Chicago-Milwaukee RT on UP. 20th Century RR Club, 329 W 18th St, Suite 902, Chicago IL 60616. www.20thcentury.org

Sep 16-23: Mexico: Copper Canyon by Train. $1450 tuition, moving classroom; naturalists, interpreters, staff; private rail car, comfortable hotels, priv baths. Elderhostel program. Info: 877-436-8056 or www.elderhostel.org

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RAIL CANADA

Vancouver Island service on the E&N Railway will continue probably until July 15, and the interested parties are said to be working on some way to make the service more permanent. The Victoria BC Times Colonist called the situation "a saga with more cliffhanger plot action than the Perils of Pauline." The railway is a subsidiary of RailAmerica Inc, and that company was praised by some for being willing to be flexible about maintaining service while plans were being worked out.

VIA Rail's financial performance figures for Jan were reported. The company said: "VIA is beginning 2002 as it ended 2001, with very strong results. Revenues for the month of January were almost $1.7 million higher than planned, while expenses were slightly lower than anticipated.

"During the first month of the year, VIA carried 4.9% more passengers than it did during the same month last year and 3.9% more than planned in its budget. The greatest improvement in the number of passengers was the Eastern Corridor with 11,500 more passengers; however, on the Western transcontinental trains the year-to-year percentage increase reached an outstanding 22.4%."

Looking at the peak summer period ahead, Jim Berwick of VIA Marketing said that there are still many unknowns. "We expect the inbound overseas market to be weak, but we are hoping that Canadians and Americans will travel closer to home than in other years."

The average on-time perf for Jan 2002 was 87.4%, or 2.4% better than VIA's objective for the month.

In Jan, Corridor-East had 173,127 passengers; SW Ontario had 99,347; Eastern Services had 16,140; and Western Service had 7,577. The system total, excluding remote services, counted 302,290 riders for a 4.5% increase from Jan 2001.

Corridor-East took in $10.2 million in revenues, SW Ontario $3.1 million, Eastern Services $1.5 million, and Western Services $2.2 million. The revenue to expense ratio for the system (excluding remote services) was 47% (better than the 42% budgeted).

CARS & CONSISTS

***Acela Express** train 2155, Metropark NJ May 14 (set #10): power car 2016, first-class end coach 3214, business coaches 3533 and 3540, café/bistro 3306, business coach 3534, end car business coach 3413, power car 2038. Same, train 2155, Newark NJ Apr 22 (set #1): power car 2018, first-class end coach 3217, bus. coaches 3505 & 3500, café/bistro 3304, bus. coach 3511, end car bus. 3405, power car 2004 (21mins late, no turn at Boston, in reverse order). Same, testing at Phila. May 1 (set #23): power car 2002, end car bus. class 3402, bus. coach 3506, café/bistro 3303, bus. class 3520 & 3504, first-class end coach 3206, power car 2000. Same, train 2157, Newark NJ Apr 22 (set #17): power car 2022, end car bus. class 3412, bus. coach 3551, café/bistro 3312, bus. coaches 3518 & 3539, first-class end coach 3212, power car 2011.

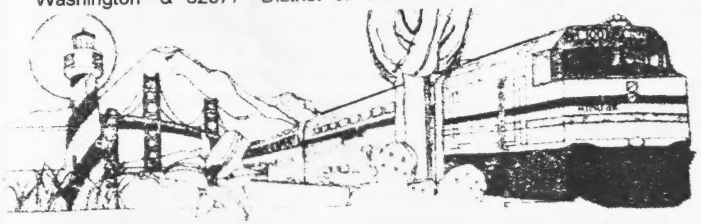
***Acela Regional** train 95, Newark NJ Apr 22: engine 927 (AEM-7AC); cars 21053, 81505, 82021, 21084, 21165, 82018 coaches, 43004 café "City of Solana Beach", 44846 (ex-Pacific) full bus. class. Same, train 174: engine 925 (AEM-7AC); cars 21151, 21099, 21281, 82519, 82040, 82086 coaches, 82503 café/bistro, 44943 full bus. class. Same, train 185, Trenton NJ, Apr 22: engine 951 (AEM-7); cars 44966, 44837, 44953 coaches, 43306 lounge-dinette, 44727 & 44923 coaches, 20971 full bus. class.

***Silver Star,** train 91, Newark NJ Apr 22: engine 609 (E60); cars 1548 MHC, 1705 bag-mail, 2516 "Pacific Gardens" crew/dorm, 62025 "Scenic View", 62007 "Colonial View" sleepers, 8514 diner, 28012 "Meridian Club" smoker lge/dinette, 25072, 25083, 25027 & 25089 coaches.

***California Zephyr,** train 5, Chicago Apr 23: engines 88, 142 & 190 (P42s); cars 39046 transition dorm, 32006 & 32025 slprs, 38034 diner, 33026 lounge, 34042 & 34062 coaches, 35010 café as coach, 1441 MHC off Denver with mech prob, 1439 MHC, 71230, 71156, 74030 & 74081 Express Trac refrigerators, 71111, 71144 exp boxes, 462220, 462133, 462127, 460138 & 462233 RoadRailers. All RoadRailers off at Denver.

***Capitol Corridor** train 542, Sacramento CA Apr 25: engine 2004 (F59PHI); cars 8008 "Stanislaus River" coach, 8803 "San Gabriel Valley" bistro/diner, 8203 "Bodega Bay" coach/bag, 8020 "Feather River" coach, 8314 "Mt. Pinos" cab-coach.

***Coast Starlight**, train 14, Sacramento Apr 25: engines 117 & 116 (P42s); cars 1216 bag, 39035 trans-dorm, 32095 "Nebraska", 32115 "Washington" & 32077 "District of Columbia" slprs, 39972 Pacific Parlour, 38061 diner, 33031 lge-dinette, 34109, 34515 Kiddie, 34114, 34061 coaches.—James Langan.



WEST COAST REPORT

A Metrolink train and a BNSF freight were involved in a head-on collision at Placentia CA on Apr 23. It was Metrolink's worst accident, killing two passengers and injuring at least 160 of the 300 or so riders, and including the engineer and conductor. The freight crew suffered injuries also. In the 8:16am incident, the freight crew missed seeing a yellow signal; the engineer told police that the sun had blinded him, causing him to miss the yellow slow signal, but he slowed, looking for the next, which was red. At that point he knew he could not stop in time, and he reportedly radioed the commuter train to stop. It stopped in an intersection, and its engineer left the cab and ran into the first car, warning passengers to get down. The Metrolink train was in push mode, so the engine at the rear did not receive the impact of the 3-engine freight, running at 20mph. The first two cars were derailed by the impact.

Combined with the wrecks of the *Auto Train* and *Silver Meteor* in a relatively short time span, the accident brought discussions of rail safety into the media in May.

Amtrak's Capitol Corridor has been running print ads with coupons good for $2 off food or beverage on the trains. The offer is good May 4-31. Also, the trains offer free rides for two children 2-15 if accompanied by a full-fare adult on weekends.

The BART extension to San Francisco airport should be open by year-end; it is about 95% completed now. DOT Secretary Norm Mineta on May 24 delivered a federal grant installment of $75 million to BART, part of funding for the line. The presentation ceremony took place at the new Millbrae station. There, Caltrain also will connect with BART.

Work on the line was halted for 18 days in early 2000 in order to provide protection for the endangered San Francisco garter snake, costing BART $1 million. The same situation halted work again May 9 for a short time when another dead snake was found. The snakes inhabit a marsh near the SF airport.

BART must decide soon how to close a $28 million deficit for next fiscal year. Being looked at are fare increases, parking fees and various service reductions.

There were discussions not long ago about re-routing the *Empire Builder* off Stevens Pass and onto Stampede Pass in Washington State, and BNSF bought out the entire Washington Central RR in order to take back the Stampede Pass line. Now the Ellensburg WA Daily Record reports (May 20) that BNSF will decide soon whether to halt through service over Stampede Pass for the summer. The reason is that it must divert maintenance of way crews from the pass to the Seattle area for Sound Transit projects.—G.Poon.

California Hi-speed rail: Ron Diridon gave a presentation in early May: the first route will be downtown L.A.-San Jose and will cost about $11 billion. It will probably not go to S.F. through San Jose, since the distance is too short to get up to speed and down again. His present plan is to run an express train leaving every 6mins, but may back off to 10mins. Every third train will be express.

Ticket price will be slightly less than an airline ticket. He said the train will earn a substantial profit and easily pay off its debts--$400 million net per year is the estimate. The trains will be full from Day 1. The most optimistic schedule is construction starting in 2005 and operation beginning in 2010. Security will be similar to European and Japanese high-speed trains. He said he has the support of the airlines (except Southwest) He thinks high-spd will allow Central Valley-Silicon Valley commuting, as a $25 ticket to Fresno might be possible.—Jack May.

Napa Valley Wine Train operators, the Napa Valley Railroad, will begin regular, as opposed to gourmet dining, passenger service between Napa and Yountville CA, in the Napa Valley, May 24. Three-car trains, pulled by one of the line's Alco engines, and including a full lounge car with refreshments for sale, will use the Napa Valley Wine Train station at 1275 McKinstry Street in Napa. The trip takes 25-30mins and costs $7 one-way or $12 roundtrip for adults.

Napa departures on Mon-Fri are at 9:15am, 11:30am, 4pm & 6:30pm; on Sat they are 9:15am, 12:30pm, 4pm & 6pm; on Sun, 9am, 12:30pm & 6pm. Yountville (southbd) departures are Mon-Fri 10am, 2pm, 4:45pm & 9pm; Sat they are 10am, 3pm, 4:45pm & 8:30pm; and Sun 11am, 3pm, 4:45pm & 8:30pm. Info from 1-800-427-4124.

Oregon City, Oregon will become an Amtrak stop in the very near future. The small city is between Salem and Portland in the timetables, but closer to Portland—in fact, it's a southern suburb of Portland. Oregon City will borrow $1.1 million to build a station facility. The *Cascades,* but not the *Coast Starlight* will serve it.

Amtrak California schedule changes for Apr 29 (plus Mar 18) are summarized as follows by Caltrans: The major change on the *Pacific Surfliner* route was the addition of a fifth round trip weekends only between L.A. and Goleta.

Even bigger news was the addition of a sixth *San Joaquin,* running between Bakersfield and Sacramento (#701 & 704). With this train came some major changes to connecting bus services on existing routes, and the addition of two new routes (East Valley connecting at Fresno, and Bay Area-Stockton, providing Oakland and S.F. with connections for the two round trips that operate to or from Sacramento).

On the *Capitol* route, state budget shortages prevented the addition of the planned 10th and 11th round trips. Instead several adjustments were made to meet the needs of growing ridership: A new train was added, leaving San Jose at 3:40 pm weekdays only. To allow for this, the San Jose-Oakland portion of #528 (weekdays) was discontinued, and #546 (also weekdays) was discontinued entirely. Train 546's slot was filled by a through Route 99 bus from S.F. to Sacramento, returning from Sac'to in the late evening. Other trains were modified by up to an hour, with some number changes. All weekend trains are now numbered in the 700 series, even if the schedule is identical to the 500 series weekday counterpart. There were several bus route changes and Route 28-Peninsula was discontinued due to low ridership.

Cascades route: the first southbound train from Seattle (#751) runs a half-hour later Sun and holidays as #757. The connecting bus to Eugene was adjusted accordingly. All other changes were minor.

Caltrain: Effective no earlier (and possibly later) than May 25, Caltrain will launch the first of two major, systemwide projects that will cause weekend train service to be replaced by the RRX bus service, which is expected to honor normal Caltrain fare media. The bus service will serve at least San Jose Diridon, Palo Alto and Hillsdale stations, with a Millbrae stop also possible, and will provide departures according to the previous train schedules from first train to 8pm (late night bus trips will not be offered). For exact RRX details, call 1-800-660-4287 or check www.caltrain.com.

Starting no earlier than July 1, due to recessionary conditions affecting operating revenue and budgets, Caltrain may temporarily reduce weekday service until budget conditions improve. Caltrain also plans an across-the-board train fare increase effective July 1.

The next Amtrak California timetable is expected probably Oct 27, 2002.

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San Francisco's Third Street Light Rail line, which will connect the economicly depressed Bayview-Hunters Point area with the rest of the city, will have its ground breaking on May 28. The first phase of the project is expected to be completed by 2005, at a cost of over $557 million—funded by a variety of sources. After that, a subway is planned, which would bring the total cost to $1.4 billion.

Altamont Commuter Express reports that Fannie Mae has a new "Location Efficient Mortgage" plan for home buyers in the SF Bay Area, saving them money if they buy near a public transit facility.

West to East: Return Long-Distance Trip on Amtrak

By Jack Turner

Having lost our planned round trip to San Diego due to the late arrival of the *Sunset Limited* into Los Angeles, we opted for a stroll to the Mexican markets on Olvera Street. Unfortunately, our luggage had to be towed along, as a national security alert nixed the idea of short-term bag checking. Tired from the luggage handling, we took advantage of the red cap service, which delivered our luggage and us directly to our sleeper via large golf cart. This was surely one of the wiser moves of the trip, as we avoided the long walk through the tunnel under the tracks, as well as the steep ramp to the platform.

Santa Fe Railway's *Super Chief* was known by many as "The train of the stars" before Amtrak's formation, and today's *Southwest Chief* proudly lives up to its heritage. We were delighted to find our sleeper was a Superliner II car, the "Illinois", which marked my tenth state-named sleeper ridden.

The red cap service got us trainside at 6pm, in advance of our fellow passengers. After we stowed luggage in the lower level luggage rack and in our room, again no. 3, there was ample time to walk the platform and record car numbers. During this trek I met Bob Stone, our crew chief and undoubtedly one of Amtrak's finest employees. Back in 1983 my wife Christine and I had the pleasure of riding with Bob when he was the chief on the *Sunset Limited* between L.A. and New Orleans. In an amazing coincidence, I discovered Bob's excellent *Southwest Chief* web site (www.crewten.com) via TrainWeb.com a couple weeks before our trip, exchanged e-mails, and discovered he would be working on this journey. Incredibly, our meeting 19 years earlier was at one of only three times he ever worked the *Sunset.*

As advertised, the *Southwest Chief* pulled away from the platform at 6:45pm, though we then had to back onto the adjacent track to couple up a pair of refrigerated express cars and 15 Road-Railers behind our half-dozen standard express cars. Before this maneuver began Bob Stone had welcomed guests on board and explained the procedure rather than leaving novices to speculate. Meanwhile, our car attendant Carol, another veteran of many years with Amtrak, followed with information pertinent to guests in the *Illinois*. By 7:05pm we were truly underway. Indeed, this coupling procedure is run like a well-oiled machine.

As we passed the lighted Amtrak shops, we soared into the L.A. skies like a majestic jetliner taking flight as we negotiated the new Redondo Flyover. The flyover gently carried our streamliner aloft, above other rail lines, and banked us to the east like a plane on takeoff.

First call to dinner was made just 40 minutes out of the City of Angels, and once again our sleeper was right next to the dining car. In the diner, soft jazz songs such as "Take the A Train" played in the background, as if in a fine restaurant. Each table included a vase containing pink carnations. A classy menu featuring the *Southwest Chief* name, a Southwest style border, and a picture of the Grand Canyon on a blue background enhanced the dining experience.

The dinner selections included The Hawkeye (a rib eye steak), Calvados Pork Chop, Roasted Half Chicken Veronique, Baked Turbot and Heartland Vegetarian Lasagna. A choice of six desserts included Grandma's Peach Cobbler, Margarita Cheesecake and Chocolate Treasure. The entrees and desserts lived up to their fanciful names, as each mean throughout the trip was presented in eye-pleasing fashion by our chef, who obviously took great pride in her work. In fact, meals aboard the *Southwest Chief* would prove to be the most enjoyable of any Amtrak trip I have ever taken.

Following stops in Fullerton, where the San Diego line diverges, and in San Bernardino, train 4 began the twisting assault on Cajon Pass along the San Andreas Fault. Though the trip was in darkness, I could visualize each turn, having traversed the line in daylight when the *Desert Wind* used to run, as well as having railfanned trackside a few years ago, an experience I shall never forget.

After viewing the large BNSF yards at Barstow shortly after 11pm, I needed to turn in for the night as we crossed the Mojave Desert and began the process of having to set our watches forward as we crossed time zones.

The smooth Santa Fe tradition continues today under BNSF management, providing an excellent night's sleep. Following breakfast, we adjourned to the Sightseer lounge to enjoy the interesting commentary of Gerald Pinto, a member of the Navajo nation, we explained native lore and pointed out scenic highlights between Gallup NM and Albuquerque. During these three hours, we learned a great deal about the Native American culture and the New Mexico vistas we were enjoying from the lounge car's oversized windows.

The desert scenery on the *Southwest Chief* is spectacular, as the railway passes numerous mesas, buttes and red sandstone formations; offers views of volcanic mountains such as snow-capped 11,301 foot Mt. Taylor; traverses regions of lava beds; and ducks through several Indian reservations. The Continental Divide was crossed at 10:15am when we reached 7200 feet at Campbell Pass. Almost an hour later, we noted the frozen Rio San Jose with patches of snow still visible in shaded spots.

We reached Albuquerque at 12:10pm, which allowed 45mins to walk the length of our 4-engine, 31-car train and purchase crafts from Native Americans who carry out a 100-year-old tradition of selling wares on the platform. During the stopover, a crew washed the sleeping cars' windows with brushes mounted on long poles, which is something seldom seen today. As we departed Albuquerque, lunch beckoned and we found that the menu featured five choices including the delicious Philly Cheesesteak sandwich that I selected.

Old Santa Fe signs erected years ago to inform passengers of interesting sights remained beside the tracks at San Felipe and Santo Domingo pueblos. Departing Lamy at 2:01pm, we were escorted by Bob Stone to the crew sleeper for a unique and excellent view of a famous and exceptionally scenic stretch of our route. As good fortune had it, there was no transition sleeper on this trip (it was bad-ordered the previous trip). In place of the transition car was a regular Superliner sleeper, which offered a clear forward view over the top of the baggage car, as both end doors on Superliner sleepers are on the upper level. Transition sleepers have only a lower-level door on the forward end to allow crew access to the baggage car.

Thus, only on rare occasions such as this would a forward view be possible. The forward visibility was like riding in a dome car, though it required standing up. Normally the crew sleeper would be off-limits to Amtrak guests; however, this opportunity was granted to allow RTN to chronicle this historic rail line.

Six minutes past Lamy, the *Southwest Chief* passed through Apache Canyon, whose narrow granite walls tightly envelope the railway. After passing through Canoncity, the *Chief* tackled impressive Glorieta Pass at 2:25pm, the met the westbound *Southwest Chief* at Fox siding at 2:36. Another interesting sight, Starvation Peak, came into view at 2:53pm; however, we would not make our closest pass of the distinctively shaped mountain for another 27mins. Before then, we crossed the Pecos River at Rybera and circumnavigated a famous double "S" curve 10mins later at 3:15pm. Between the double "S" curve and our next stop, Las Vegas NM, we passed 22 classic semaphore signals, half of which guarded eastbound movements. The sight of the blades lowering after our lead engines passed was a special memory to file in our memory banks.

Seventeen minutes beyond Las Vegas, the *Chief* traversed scenic Shoemaker Canyon, where a few more semaphores still protect train moves. A half hour later, Wagon Mount Mountain, shaped like a prairie wagon from pioneer days, appeared dead ahead. The beauty of this region typifies the settings of many movie Westerns and, at the same time, provides appreciation for those who traveled the old Santa Fe Trail.

We returned to our forward perch an hour later as we departed Raton NM at 5:36pm and began our final approach to Raton Pass, the highest point on our line. The quartet of P42 engines were working hard, though the westbound trek over the pass is more taxing, due to a steeper grade.

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L'Esprit du Nord: The Northern Spirit

By Jim Langan

Photos by the author.

Since no one up to now has written about this VIA route, and some of the little notes I had told of drastic changes in the 10-6 sleepers leased from Amtrak, I decided to make the trip for new mileage and to ascertain the facts. No operas this trip—the family singers were enjoying a vacation at their lake house on Bob's Lake ON, southeast of Ottawa, so I planned the trip to end up near there at Smiths Falls and have some R&R before driving back to the States with them. Really, it was from one Hudson to the other.

Day 1: Jul 27, 2001. I was up early to catch my local NJT-North Jersey Coast train 3208 at 5:45am to Penn Station, NY City: ALP-44 power and nine Comet IV coaches equipped with global positioning systems that announce the stations both verbally and on overhead digital signs with "This station is..." upon arrival, and "The next station is..." upon departure. At each announcement this hour in the morning, everybody turns over in their seats while sleeping. At least there are no cell phones.

At Penn Station I boarded the 7:15am departure of train 63, the *Maple Leaf* for the first leg to Toronto in business class, a scheduled 12-hr trip which turned out to be a little longer. It was a beautiful sunny and clear morning, and my window seat afforded a great view of the Hudson River to Albany behind P32ACDM #711, and I opted for breakfast as soon as the café opened (I only had coffee and juice before leaving home), offering an even better view from the dinette table.

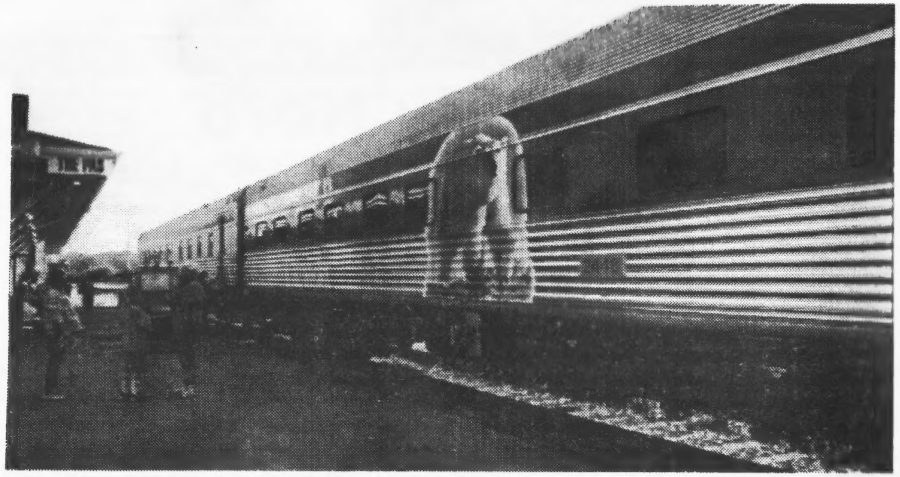
It was there on a curve that I noticed we had a Heritage *Adirondack* coach for our first coach. It was the morning commuter hours, so we met a steady stream on Metro-North of both MUs and push-pulls pushed by P32s and FL-9s interspersed with four Amtraks from Albany, passing #240 at Yonkers and then we cross-platformed from #242 at Croton.

We were on time at Albany, and with a 15-min stop I was able to get the full consist of our train. The *Adirondack* coach was 7616 "Whitehall". We also changed engines to F40PHR #288, and our P32 was wyed and positioned for #282 from Niagara Falls.

We left the station on time, but were held at the bridge for the arriving 282, with F40PH #411, due to single track. The new Albany-Rensselaer station has not yet opened; it is south of the present station. It has an overhead bridge for access to the southbd platform. I'd say it was about 95% complete.

The lead to the Post Road spur for the Boston section of the *Lake Shore* has also been moved farther south, as the former yard is gone, which was more for storage of unused cars, and the grade was eased, so that one P40 or P42 can handle the train. This saves one locomotive, as it can be used for a same-day turnaround. With Amtrak now owning the track to the CSX connection from Selkirk Yard, we made good time to Schenectady and Amsterdam before joining CSX, where you "dance from track to track" and wait for meets across NY State, and we were down 30mins at some stops, but only 10 mins at Buffalo, and then lost it again at Niagara Falls NY. There you have to wait for Canadian Customs to call you over the bridge into Ontario. Seems they move their staff from the highway bridge station close by to make the inspection.

We would have left there on time, but for them finding an Apple computer unopened in one of the coaches, which no one would claim. They said we would not be allowed to leave until someone claimed it! This announcement was made three or four times, and our Amtrak café attendant was allowed back on the train to unload his sealed food and beverages, which he then stored in the station, and the VIA attendant was unpacked and



The author's car was this sleeper, 2448, leased from Amtrak, who named it "Oak Grove". It's on VIA Rail's Northern Spirit service, on train 693 *Hudson Bay* at The Pas, MB on July 30, 2001. The car carries a polar bear image on the side. It was built by Budd in 1950 and was SP 9004—a 9-rmt, 6-db, 5-wr sleeper.

ready to serve, before they hauled a well-dressed man off and placed him in a locked SUV. I never did see the computer!

We were then off at 5pm, 45mins late. At Aldershot station, VIA #79 was held out until we arrived and then pulled in behind us. This is the connecting train for London and Windsor ON. We made up 15 mins by Oakville, but were then running against the outbound GO Transit commuter traffic, so I had dinner before our arrival at 7:45pm.

First on arriving at Toronto I had to pick up my tickets for the balance of the trip at the VIA ticket office. They were all in order. They need 14 days by mail, and I had ordered them only on Jul 15.

I did note that VIA train 51, which now has been branded "Constellation" service, was in the station with a "Chateau" and a "Park" sleeper for the 11:30 departure tonight to Montreal. I rode this train on Jan 20, 2000, four days after its inauguration. It saves a night in a Toronto hotel room and connects with the southbd *Adirondack* if you are returning to the States.

Then it was across the street to the Royal York Hotel, now leased to the Fairmount system, since CPR spun off their hotel system into a separate corporation. After settling into the room, I opted for a few nightcaps at my favorite bar, the "Library", in the hotel. You meet interesting people, as it's the only public place in the hotel where you can smoke, and tonight was no different. I met people from England and Australia, as well as some serious card players, as Toronto was hosting an International Bridge competition all week, with some 60,000 players competing. Every hotel in town was sold out! My late wife and I had enjoyed this place many times when son Kevin was singing at Canadian Opera down the street.

Day 2: July 28. After a hardy shower and breakfast and a look out the window to see my train already in the station, I got the engine numbers (wouldn't get the full consist until the next morning), and proceeded across the street for a 9am departure on train 1, the *Canadian*, and 5.2 new miles on the York Subdivision.

I had not been on the westbd *Canadian* since the Newmarket Sub was abandoned between Barrie and Washago ON. For the uninitiated, the *Canadian* always entered and left Toronto on different routes, so that the train was positioned properly for westbd departures. All eastbd trains remained on the Bala Sub out of Washago, connecting to the Kingston Sub (lakeshore corridor line) east of the station before entering westbd. Upon leaving, it made a short hop to the Weston Sub before entering the Newmarket to Washago and the Bala west. Now it travels only to Snider, where it must back up onto the York, then proceed east to join the Bala at Doncaster.

By my scanner, I heard we were a 22-car train with the two F40s for power (in the winter it's about eight cars). I was 10 cars up from the "Park" dome-lounge car, and except for Sioux Lookout we had to make two stops to board and detrain passengers. The train is really three sections: coach with a Skytop lounge and takeout food service, and two sleeper sections centered on a Skytop lounge and diner, followed by the "Park" car. The Skytops in the sleeper sections are called Activity Cars, featuring TVs, games, magazines and papers and contests for the children and adults, led by the attendant. I was assigned to the front diner for meals. In the morning there are hot beverages and muffins, sweet cakes in the dome car lounges, self-service, plus fresh fruit juices and ice water all day, with champagne and cookies in the afternoon.

Day 3: Jul 29. The day started with our arrival in Sioux Lookout deep in the Canadian Shield. We had three tour groups on board; one would detrain with me at Winnipeg that afternoon, another group to Jasper and the third continuing on an Alaskan cruise from Vancouver.

On arrival at Sioux Lookout an eastbd CNR freight was leaving with Florida Tri-Rail cars in the consist. These must have been the cars mentioned in RTN 636 as heading from California's ACE commuter service to Toronto's GO Transit under lease. I could not see whether the locomotive was with them, as our train blocked the view.

Our arrival at Winnipeg was held up by a 4-hour late eastbd train 2. As they can't service two trains in the station at the same time, that put us down an hour. I didn't mind, though, since my train north wouldn't leave for three hours. I checked my bags at the ticket office and wandered around "The Forks", an entertainment and dining area built over the years on the site of a former freight yard on the north side of the station. There are a few preserved rail cars scattered around the complex—ex-CNR "Tourist" sleepers (read "Immigrant"), caboose, box cars and an old Winnipeg trolley car at one of the outdoor eating areas, aptly called the "Trolley Bar & Restaurant". Since it was Sunday, it was crowded with tourists and locals.

Then it was time for the cocktail hour, so I proceeded through the station and across York Road on the west side to Earl's Restaurant & Bar. I'd been there before on the trip west referred to earlier. It is more of a sports bar now, with TVs showing different CFL football games, but it served the purpose.

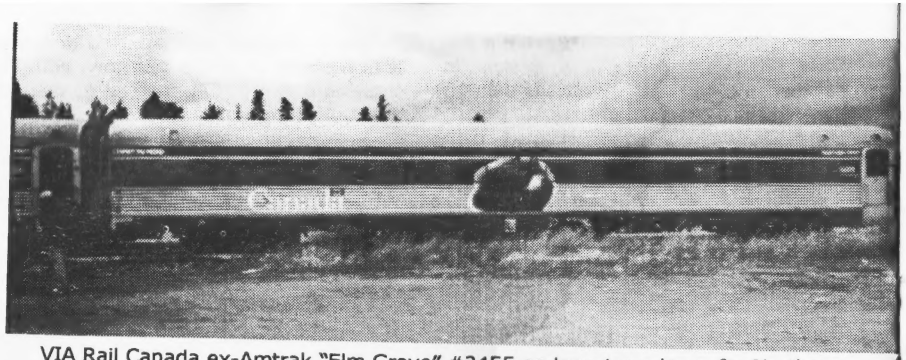
It was time now to get my bags to board the tri-weekly train 693, *Hudson Bay*, at 8:30pm. Sleeper passengers boarded first and we left on time. There were two sleepers, two coaches and the baggage car headed by an FP9Au #6313. The sleepers were the leased Amtrak 2448 (former "Oak Grove") and 2455 (ex-"Elm Grove"), both of SP origin.

My attendant, Nathalie Coulson, greeted me and escorted me to roomette 5. To my surprise, the toilets had not been removed from the roomettes. The cars had been repainted, new carpeting laid, basically similar to the *Three Rivers* cars with one exception: Roomette 10 had been replaced by a walk-in enclosed shower from a handicap-equipped rest room, whereas Amtrak replaced Roomette 9 with a shower and roomette 10 had been an enclosed handicap room with a bed.

The closet has clothes hooks, unlike Amtrak's, where you must hang your clothes on hangers to hang on the door chain (simply no one at Beech Grove visited their local hardware store for the two hole hooks). The exteriors of the cars are another thing, with solid VIA blue paint from the roofline to the window sills, not like other VIA stainless steel cars, that have a blue stripe above the windows. At the vestibule end, in large white letters is "Northern Spirit" and on the opposite end in French, "L'Esprit du Nord." On that same end are the large white letters "Canada" with the Maple Leaf flag on the car sides below the windows.

Since these "Grove" cars are ex-SP, the large numberplates between the bedrooms and roomettes have been removed, holes plugged and a painting of local animals from window tops to the frames inserted. The new numberboards with number only are offset to the right. Car names have been dropped. On my car it was a polar bear, and 2455 had a caribou.

Since meals are not included, I walked into the diner, the next car, for a couple bisonburgers and a pastry for dessert. Prices are reasonable on all selections. The diners are in the same series and



VIA Rail Canada ex-Amtrak "Elm Grove" #2455 on long-term lease for Northern Spirit trains 692-693, *Hudson Bay*, at Thompson MB on July 31, 2001. Budd built the car in 1950 for SP, who numbered it 9000. It's a 9-rmt, 6-db-5-hw sleeper.

have the same layout as mainline cars. As you enter the diner, the first two tables are used for silverware, napkins and condiments on one side and the Customer Service Mgr/Steward's desk on the other. The next four tables are separated by a glass partition engraved with birds, set for serving meals, then unlike the mainline cars, a second glass partition which is see-through in the daytime and mirrors at night. This is a four-table area for a smoking area, then another glass separation same as the first for two more smoking tables. As required, the four-table smoking area can be used for additional diners and smoking prohibited. I was eating when we passed Portage-la-Prairie, normally a stop, but no passengers tonight, so we sped up off the main line to head northwest into Saskatchewan Province. One attendant, Crystal this night, was assigned to the diner, but the sleeper and coach car attendants, Nathalie and Dusty, help at all meals as does the Service Manager. It was then off to bed.

Day 4: Jul 30. I awoke in Hudson Bay SK, where we left the CNR rails for the Hudson Bay Railway, now owned by Omnitrax (USA), for the balance of our journey to Churchill. About two hours later, we were back in Manitoba traveling northeast to our first stop in a town known as The Pas. The train was to be refueled and watered here, so most got off to walk around in the morning air. There was a man with three Huskie sled dogs on the station steps, and or course everyone who passed stopped to pet or take pictures. This was my first chance to get some pictures of our equipment and combine 5649, on a siding, not to be used that day on #291, *Lynn Lake*, the mixed train scheduled to leave at 11:15am.

Engine 3542, still in CNR colors, but leased from CANAC to Omnitrax, an M420W, 2000hp built by MLW in 1974, was making up the train in the yard behind us. It was here also, after much switching, that we picked up a second FP9Au, #6302, as our second unit, plus two additional crew members for the many switching moves the rest of the way.

As there are no conductors on Canadian railroads, they work directly with the engineer, dropping off to throw hand switches as required, directing backups and working in the baggage car, which becomes very busy from this point.

We backed out from the station, that is actually on the Lynn Lake branch, then off to the right northeasterly. Around 1pm we arrived in Wabowden. That is not an Indian name, but is from the name of the founder of the settlement, Mr. W.A. Bowden. Here two Royal Canadian Mounted police officers boarded with our new coach passengers, mainly native Cree Indians, who after loading boxes and other purchases into the baggage car, pretty much filled the coaches. They also joined us in the smoking lounge, where some spirited "dealer's choice poker" games got started with 25-cent minimum bets. Their children brought Crayolas and coloring books to while away their time.

The RCMPs also joined us for lunch and said they were heading home for a time-off period. Most of the stops are flag stops at road crossings after this until we reached Thompson Jct, a wye leading up to Thompson on a 29-mile branch. After

(continued on page 21)

Jack Turner: Continued from page 10

Fifteen minutes later, a herd of 30 or 40 elk bounded down a hill and safely crossed just ahead of our train, moments before we ducked into half-mile long Raton Tunnel. Only the engineers could have witnessed this sight as we did.

When we exited the tunnel, we were in Colorado and beginning the steep downhill journey, passing legendary Wooten Ranch on the left. By this time, darkness had set in, as building snow clouds obscured the setting sun. If rumors are to be believed, the sun may be setting on the Raton Pass line, as most BNSF freight uses a lower grade route through Amarillo TX, and talk of a sale to a short line or outright abandonment has resumed, as has been the case periodically in recent years.

Dinner time came at 6:30pm as we arrived in Trinidad CO, and once again the soft music, carnations and superb cuisine made for a memorable experience. Pleasant company was enjoyed during the meal and once more our table mates were making their first trip by train. As John slept, we crossed into Kansas, his 49th state, which tied him with good ole dad (we both are missing only Hawaii). Passenger trains are the reason for our being able to reach so many states, as only South Dakota has not involved any train riding. One can only hope future generations will be able to see our great nation at least as well as we have.

The morning of Friday, Feb 15 found us backing into a siding at DeSoto KS to uncouple several of our RoadRailers, which would then be driven to their destinations. This isolated location apparently allows train 4 to switch out these cars without interrupting the busy BNSF line. During the middle of the night, we had passed through Topeka and Lawrence on one of the few Amtrak segments I had not covered before this trip. On my 1976 westbound journey on the *Southwest Limited*, Amtrak bypassed those cities. After an hour spent cutting the RoadRailers, we were underway toward our next station stop, Kansas City MO.

Departure from K.C. came at 8:48am, a mere 27mins late, and shortly we climbed over a new flyover that has helped alleviate rail congestion at a busy rail junction. A half hour later we crossed the Missouri River on an impressive low steel trestle and traveled through rural country to LaPlata MO. The *Chief* nicks the southeastern edge of Iowa, and we made our sole Hawkeye State stop in Fort Madison at 12:28pm.

The Mississippi River flowed past on our right side and was crossed just east of the station on a curved combination highway/rail bridge. Forty minutes later we reached Cameron Jct, where a new connector track was built through a cornfield a few years ago to link the former Santa Fe and Burlington lines following the BNSF merger. This connector is viewed better from the *Southwest Chief* than the *California Zephyr*, as the old ATSF passes above the ex-CB&Q, then the new connector track makes a sweeping arc back to the former Burlington line. The *CZ* cruises as speed below the ex-ATSF, while the *Chief* navigates round the connector after passing above the CB&Q. Before the connector's opening, the *Southwest Chief* operated via Streator and Joliet rather than Mendota and Naperville.

A few minutes past Cameron Jct, we eased to a stop in Galesburg IL, which has the distinction of being served by three different Amtrak trains bound for three different destinations on their westbound journeys. By 3:13pm we were passing through Aurora and gliding along the busy freight and commuter line through Naperville and Downers Grove. Shortly, Sears Tower and the Chicago skyline came into view and train 4 paused to drop its express cars near the Amtrak yard before backing into Union Station.

Our 4:21pm arrival was actually 15 mins ahead of schedule, and we sadly bade goodbye to a train that lived up to the old *Super Chief* name. The entire experience of riding the *Southwest Chief*, from scenery to ambiance to cuisine and crew friendliness, definitely rated a "top ten" ranking on my list of the best train rides.

Next up was a ride on Amtrak's *Three Rivers*, the successor to the famed *Broadway Limited*. Our 15-min late departure at 9:35pm was followed by a 73-min stop at the Amtrak yards to attach one express car and 15 RoadRailers. The delay gave me a chance to visit the Horizon café next door and select a

bedtime snack to supplement the McBurger from earlier. Meals, snacks and beverages are complimentary for sleeper passengers in an operation that is very similar to the *Twilight Shoreliner*, which we reported on last fall. Before the trip, this food service promised to be a letdown from the full meals enjoyed on other long-distance trains; however, the change of pace proved quite satisfactory thanks in part to a most pleasant café attendant.

While the train was standing still, we had our attentive car attendant Dara Lee make up the beds. After seven nights in standard bedrooms, Deluxe Bedroom A seemed like a palace. I also was happy to add a new Viewliner car, "Tranquil View", to my list of sleeper rides. I decided to try out the shower in our room's bathroom and was surprised by how well it drained; in fact, by morning the bathroom was quite dry.

This night's sleep was not as sound as previous nights, as our room was directly over the wheels, which produced a few sleep-shattering jolts. It also is a big disorienting to sleep at a right angle to the window after nights of sleeping parallel to it. Nevertheless, we were ready to face the day as train 40 pulled out of Pittsburgh at 8:54am. The former Pennsylvania Railroad main line passes through terrific mountain scenery as it works its way along the Juniata River. The eastbound run is best, as it is all in daylight. Naturally, the day's big highlight would be Horseshoe Curve and we were primed for viewing until a paralleling eastbound Norfolk Southern coal train came into view on the inside track, obscuring the vista.

Several Amish families detrained in Lancaster and soon we passed numerous Amish farms, recognizable by the lack of electric wires running into the homes and by the clothes hung out to dry in the back yards. In the heart of this region we zipped by Leeman Place, the junction with the Strasburg Railroad's tourist line. As we approached Philadelphia, passing commuter stations became more frequent though traffic was light on this Saturday. Philadelphia 30th Street Station was reached at 4:06pm, 36mins ahead of schedule. The attractive Club Acela (nee Metroplitan Lounge) made a fine place to cool our heels until our trip's final train arrived. The Winter Olympics were airing on the club's television and for a moment we thought "If only we could be in Salt Lake!" These thoughts were dashed by the realization that we would have missed Oklahoma and the *Southwest Chief*.

The southbound *Silver Meteor* breezed into 30th Street Station behind a sleek new HHP engine, boarded a few passengers and departed on time at 8:37pm. Sleeper "Tower View" was another car I had not slept in yet, as were the other two sleepers in our consist. Normally, the *Meteor* carries two sleepers; however, the President's Day weekend seemed to have attracted heavy southbound traffic. As we settled into Room 2, the first call for dinner was made, so we made our way next door to the diner for a late repast. Almost instantly, the dining car filled to capacity and numerous passengers were upset at having to wait until 9:30 or 10pm to eat. Late starts for dinner out of New York seem to be the norm on train 97 and one wonders why this crew requires 90mins to get started, while the *Southwest Chief* dining car can open 20 mins out of Los Angeles. No matter whether there was good reason, many guests were steamed. Fortunately, we had beaten the rush.

As we left Washington, crossed the Potomac and viewed the Alexandria Embassy Suites Hotel where we spent several nights last June, it was time for the trip's final night's sleep on the train. I used duct tape to block tiny beams of light that slipped through the bottom of the room door's window shade and found the result most effective. Earlier in the trip, duct tape took the place of missing Velcro in holding shut a Superliner window curtain, and later helped thwart a rattling bedroom door on another train. I thank RTN contributor Gene Poon for this helpful suggestion in one of his past articles, as I had never thought of this before.

For the only time in the trip, I climbed into the upper berth while young John slept in the lower. I found the ride smoother and the bed wider up top and slumbered soundly for eight hours, waking only at Florence SC. Morning found us very close to schedule and we enjoyed a final railroad breakfast while gazing at small South Carolina towns and Georgia marshes. We arrived back in Jacksonville at 12:21pm, ending our trip only 13mins late.

Over 9000 miles on the rails produced many fine memories of excellent scenery, golden sunsets and a few unexpected adventures. With the notable exception of the *Texas Eagle* and *Sunset Limited*, our trains had arrived at our destinations either early or within about 20mins of schedule. We had missed a chance to ride the new *Pacific Surfliner* equipment, but had covered every other intended route plus three commuter lines, and we both visited our 49th state. Meals had been among the most delicious in all our years of train travel, and all equipment had been in good mechanical condition except for the cold shower on the *Texas Eagle*. However, two of our fondest memories and certainly the biggest surprises were meeting so many nice fellow passengers who were making their first rail trips and being served by so many cheerful Amtrak employees, especially in light of the very real threat to their livelihoods. If the opportunity presented itself, we would commence the same trip again tomorrow. I urge readers to visit Bob Stone's www.saveamtrak.com and follow its easy links to contact Congress on behalf of Amtrak.

(The westbound portion of this trip was reported on in RTN 644.)

MIXED TRAIN OF THOUGHTS

Ferrovias Guatemala 3-foot gauge 2-8-2 No. 204 leads a four-car passenger train over the Guatemala River at El Carrizo, Guatemala on a Trains Unlimited Tours special charter trip on Jan 13, 2002. This was the fifth of six such photo runbys on this day, all of which were in photogenic locations with superb lighting. Trains Unlimited Tours director Chris Skow carefully chose each location, and each participant was quite pleased with his selections. No. 204 was built by Baldwin in Nov 1948 at their Philadelphia works.—Alex Mayes.

Memorial Day Weekend came early this year—May 25-27, and a record number of travelers were expected to be out and about, although the increase was less than it would have been without the terrorist attacks of last September. Amtrak evidently was making no forecasts of their expected ridership.

Those out to ride trains would expect some disappointments, including these two: The narrow-gauge Cumbres & Toltec Railroad in Colorado and New Mexico would not be opening for the holiday, the traditional beginning of its season. To the shock of all concerned, the FRA announced eight days before the holiday weekend that two small track sections were not up to passenger-carrying standards. The railroad began repairs at once, but had to establish an alternative operation that avoided the bad track areas. Riders were to be sent by bus from Antonito to Chama

to begin an 18-mile trip, short of the regular 64-mile route.

Second, *Texas Eagle* passengers using the Houston station were to find no one on duty over the three-day weekend. Station agent Martha Landa told reporters that the passengers "will just have to wait outside", as the building and its facilities would be closed, since the two attendants were taking holiday time off. Amtrak, in its recent controversial staff-and-facilities cutting move, reduced the Houston staff from seven to two.

AMTRAK

Amtrak got a new president on May 15. As reported in RTN 643, President George Warrington announced on Mar 6 his resignation, and that he would stay on the job until a successor was found. He was joining NJ Transit. He headed off to that transit agency after the announcement Apr 26 from Amtrak Board Chairman Robert Smith that David L. Gunn would take over the presidency of the rail corporation on May 15.

Gunn has been most recently working at top levels in transit systems, though he began his railroad career with the Santa Fe, the New York Central and the Illinois Central Gulf. He was Chief General Manager of the Toronto Transit Commission from 1995 to 1999. Earlier, he led the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, was President of the New York City Transit Authority, was General Manager/Chief Operations Officer for SEPTA, and also worked with Boston's MBTA.

He has built a reputation as one who can improve transit system cost recovery and who can deal with capital programs and equipment maintenance.

While some rail advocates worried that another transit person, lacking in passenger railroading experience, was coming aboard Amtrak, as soon as they made some acquaintance with him via his private and public statements, they generally seemed relieved and optimistic that a traditional-type railroad man would be taking over the Amtrak throttle—a person who knows what it means to run a passenger railroad.

They were aware that Gunn came out of retirement to run Amtrak not because he needed the money or another feather in his cap but because he relished the challenge of turning around America's passenger rail system, a system falling into disrepair and disrepute.

In his first letter to Amtrak employees, printed on p.19, he makes it clear that he is committed to repairing the national system and running a "high-quality" service. Those who are aware of his previous achievements, such as the remarkable turnaround of the NY City transit system, will feel confident that his are not just empty words—that he can be counted upon to deliver if at all possible. And of course that delivery will depend on Congress coming through with needed funding.

(Incidentally, Gunn claims that he "hates politics".)

●●●

NEWS IN THIS ISSUE IS UPDATED THROUGH MAY 27, 2002. Contributors to this issue not otherwise identified include Robert Abraham, Alan Feinstein, Gene Poon, Ray Saunders, Barry Steinberg, Ed Von Nordeck and Walter Zullig. James Langan contributed to the *Auto Train* report on page 20.

The consist of the *Silver Meteor* that derailed May 14 (see p. 3) was engine 50; cars 1269, 2503, 62040, 62035, 8528, 28020, 25077, 25085, 25109 & 25000. Engine 664 powered the train from NY to Washington.—Gene Poon.

Due to car shortages from recent wrecks and deferred repairs, Amtrak has shuffled Viewliner sleepers to maximize their effective usage: *Twilight Shoreliner* lost its sleeper May 19/20 (see p.4); *Cardinal* cut from 2 to 1 sleeper Jun 9/11 and dorm added May 17/18; *Silver Meteor* goes from 2 to 3 sleepers May 24/26; *Silver Star* likewise Jun 16. The *Cardinal* went temporarily from Superliner to low-level cars in late April.

Rail money vote delayed: The full US House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure had planned May 22 to mark up the Railroad Infrastructure Development and Expansion Act for the 21st Century (RIDE 21—H.R. 2950), and Amtrak Reauthorization Act of 2002 (H.R. 4545), but both items were postponed until further notice because of objections to labor items. RIDE 21 would provide capital funds for passenger and freight RR infrastructure improvement projects, and H.R. 4545 would reauthorize Amtrak for one year at $1.2 billion, plus $775 million for life-safety and security programs.

The fate of the Senate Commerce Committee's bill of Apr 18 to fund Amtrak for 5 years at $4.6 billion a year isn't known.

Just before the Memorial Day weekend (May 25-27) began, federal officials announced that US railroads and transit systems might be attacked by terrorists. The announcement reportedly was sent to all US railroads, freight and passenger, and all subway and rail transit systems. DOT Secretary Norm Mineta said that the threat level was six or seven on a scale of 1-10.

Some rail watchers wondered at the timing and motivation of the announcement, as it seemed strange that rails had not previously been seriously considered as terrorist targets since Sep 11, 2001. Would the announcement help or hurt the railroads? Did it have any connection with the fact that Sens. Hutchison and Hollings had just inserted an amendment in the Senate's Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill that would give Amtrak $55 million for increased security systemwide and for repair of equipment?

Making it more credible that rails could be a target might help win the security money and help Amtrak, while the announcement could also discourage riders and hurt Amtrak financially.

The San Francisco Chronicle reported that Mineta said "his agency issued the warning in part because of the controversy over whether the federal government failed to warn people of the potential for terrorism before the Sept. 11 attacks." In other words, the issuance at this time was not really completely predicated on any present probability of attack.

The announcement motivated the Arizona Republic to print an article May 24 recounting the Oct 9, 1995 derailment of the *Sunset Limited* near Hyder AZ, an incident that was clearly sabotage. The perpetrators have not yet been found. The paper said the FBI is keeping the case open, but has few leads. There was one death and 78 injuries in the wreck. There is still a $320,000 reward for information awaiting collection.

New Amtrak President David L. Gunn sent the following message to employees on May 21:

Dear Amtrak Employees:

During my first few days on the property I've had the opportunity to meet many employees. I've been on trains, in terminals, crew quarters and of course our headquarters. It's clear to me that most of you know that Amtrak faces enormous challenges. You understand the importance of your role in making this railroad run well and serving our customers. You also know that without the proper tools and support your jobs become very difficult.

I believe you have the right to expect straight talk from me. We no longer have the luxury to engage in pleasant but non-specific dialogue.

I am committed to a national railroad passenger system, which includes the corridor, commuter and intercity services. I will not participate in the dismemberment of our company. I will fight to keep us whole. I am committed to restoring the existing system to a state of good repair as a first priority. I am committed to an efficient, high-quality service. I will create a lean, competent management, responsive to our funders, you and our passengers. I will ask that all of us review processes, work methods and procedures to increase efficiency. We will not be self-sufficient, but we must increase our cost recovery.

Among the many good wishes that I received from you, once stands out in my mind: a Boston crewman said, "I will pray for you;" not because my personal success is important - it is Amtrak's future that is at stake.

I ask for your support. I will make mistakes. The problems we face are complex. However, my job is to serve you and our passengers. I am committed to that goal. I believe I know how to manage a railroad. I know you know how to run a railroad and provide good service. Together, we can succeed.

Sincerely,

David L. Gunn

P.S.: How's spring clean up progressing?

Under the heading, "Mr. Gunn does have his work cut out for him" is this report on the *Capitol Limited*, train 29 of May 19: The train lacks a working diner; coach food is being served out of the lounge, and sleeper food in the sleeper. The two sleepers are sold out, but one is not operating. A British group traveling around the US occupies the deluxe rooms and some standard rooms, and some rooms in the dorm-slpr are being used. However, to the rescue is an 84-seat Amcoach placed ahead of the dorm-slpr. No. 29 was 38mins late out of WAS.

Amtrak's *Auto Train*, northbd train 52, derailed at 5:08pm Apr 18 at Crescent City FL on CSX rails. Four passengers were killed (first reports said six) and 159 injured. Three of the four fatally injured were evidently passing between cars and were thrown from the train. All four were elderly individuals. Since the accident happened just after the first call to dinner, passengers were moving about and some heading to a diner.

The two engines did not derail, but most of the other (Superliner) cars did, many falling onto their sides and ending up in a jumble. The consist of the train was: engines 838 & 843 (P42s); cars 39002 transition-form, 32502 "W. Graham Claytor Jr." deluxe sleeper (these two cars did not derail), sleepers 32084 "Kansas" and 32074 "Colorado" (derailed and leaning), deluxe sleeper 32503 "A. Phillip Randolph", lounge-dinette 33101, diner 38052, deluxe sleeper 32501 "Palm Beach", sleepers 32101 "North Carolina" & 32090 "Michigan" (derailed and dragged on sides), coaches 34129, 34125, 34126 & 34120, lounge-dinette 33100, diner 38054 (derailed and leaning at angles to each other), bi-level auto carriers 9030, 9031, 9019, 9035, 9004, 9036 & 9001 (derailed, but rerailed and returned to Sanford). The rest of the auto carriers were not derailed, and they were returned to Sanford along with the cars on them being returned to their owners. Deluxe sleeper 32502 was carrying *Auto Train* product manager Sharon Mahoney and her Lorton-based officials from a staff meeting at Sanford.

Engineer Jimmy Simmons later told the press that he had spotted a kink in the tracks about 50 feet ahead of the train as it was on a left-tending curve. Both rails were bent outward to the right, he said. The affected rail portion was already under the engines as he instinctively applied the brakes. The train was traveling at 57mph, he said, in a 60-mph zone. Simmons told the Orlando Sentinel that "It was the worst day of my life."

As the NTSB investigation began, one factor being examined was track condition. CSX had done routine maintenance in the area a few days before the derailment. The outside temperature was 81 at the time of the wreck—not considered a critical temperature for sun kinks, but officials said that kinks can occur at other times for various reasons. A heavy coal train had passed over the track just six minutes ahead of the *Auto Train*.

The train was reportedly 40 cars long and carried 418 passengers and 34 crew and 202 autos. The accident occurred just an hour after departure from Sanford FL.

Amtrak announced Apr 22 that it would resume *Auto Train* service Apr 23 from each direction. The track was opened for service with slow orders at 7am Apr 21.

Amtrak said the derailed train had 16 passenger cars and 24 auto carriers, and that 14 cars and seven auto carriers had derailed.

After the derailment, Amtrak halted train 53, the southbound counterpart, at Richmond VA and it returned to Lorton. Until reopening of the line, trains 91/92 and 97/98 switched to the old SAL route through Ocala FL.

The wreck put 13 Superliner cars out of commission, severely stressing Amtrak's ability to field equipment for all its trains. It brought the total of damaged cars at Beech Grove to 47—cars Amtrak says it cannot afford to repair.

MIDWEST REPORT

The Michigan Corridor has been suffering from unreliable timekeeping. As of May 24 the *International* #364 had reached Pt. Huron on time zero times. In the previous two months it had been relatively reliable in getting there within 15mins of schedule. Train 365 has been suffering from delays at the border checkpoint, even when VIA delivers the train on time at Sarnia, which is about half the time. Are border crossing officials miffed at having to go to the train station instead of doing the inspection at the highway inspection point while train riders are bused over the border?—Gene Poon.

The Midwest in mid-May suffered a lot of high water, interfering with rail operations, including on the BNSF Marceline Subdivision, Kansas City KS to Ft. Madison IA. Ilinois Rail reported that the *Empire Builder* was detouring over the CB&Q C&I Mississippi line from Chicago to the Twin Cities May 17; a Metra train tore up the north leads into Chicago Union Station.

Kansas City Star columnist C.W. Gusewell wrote a nice column on local train travel May 20: "Train seat offers traveler a rare window on the world." Quote: "But what do two hours matter in any reasonable life? [The train was 2hrs late] We are home safely and in comfort, in a seat that lets a rider stretch his legs. Beside a window, not a porthole, that gave an ever-changing view of the living world, not just of cloud or aerial photograph."

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The Northern Spirit (continued from page 14)

two stops for hand switches, we moved up the branch, arriving about 4:25pm. Here a good deal of the new passengers from Wabowden detrained and the RCMPs oversaw the baggage work until all had left the station before they left (security?).

This stop is a 90-min refueling stop, and again the coaches filled, as highways are non-existent north of here. First we backed out and wyed in the yard, then down to the junction, proceeding through the north leg of the wye there toward Gillam. At Bridgar we entered a siding foir a southbd empty grain train, as sidings are few and far between. I did note from here the piles of overturned grain cars along the right of way in various locations. Questioning a switchman, I was told that during the grain shipping season the effort was to get the grain north and there was lots of time to salvage the cars in off season. After waiting an hour for the freight, we moved out. Sunset was close to 10:30pm, and further on we saw a caribou herd grazing. Even at 11:30 the western horizon was a golden hue, as I was getting into bed. Gillam is the last engineer's change point, but I was asleep.

Day 5: Jul 31. This morning we were plodding along at 20mph on the tundra, with few trees to be seen. Electric wires were hung on triangular-shaped poles to keep them from sinking in the wet ground only three feet above the permafrost. We had made up our time and arrived in Churchill on time at 8:30.

The station there is being rebuilt, with a temporary trailer station being used as a ticket office and baggage room. After we detrained, the train went south in the yard to another wye to be aligned for tonight's departure. During this procedure the train was cleaned, beds changed, etc. by the attendants. Then they were off to the Churchill Motel for some rest. The main street of Churchill, about a city block's walk, is Kelsey Blvd, and is about 10 blocks long, lined with shops, a supermarket, a few motels and apartments. There was a small park in front of the Chamber of Commerce building, that was built on stilts, I guess for easier winter access.

I stopped at the Tundra Buggy office to make arrangements for an afternoon 4-hour tour of the Churchill Wildlife Management area about 15 miles from town. Also available were other tours, boat rides and helicopters for Beluga-whale watching. I had seen them before in the Saguenay area of Quebec.

I then walked about the 2-block-wide area adjacent to Kelsey Blvd—mostly apartments, churches and the Eskimo Museum. I was told that most of the Eskimo population had moved north to the recently new Nunavit Territory.

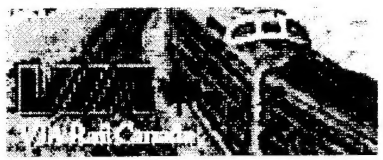
Walking back toward Kelsey, I noted an approaching freight headed by M420(W)s 3545 and 3551, of mostly grain cars, but also about nine TTX flats, loaded with truck trailers, pickup trucks and SUVs. Many of the locals drive All Terrain Vehicles—very few private cars. A freshly-painted blue and gray HBRy SW-1200 #824 was switching the grain elevator shipping dock, where ocean-going ships deliver it mostly to far Eastern ports, trading loads for empties.

After watching a National Geographic video at the Tundra Buggy ticket office and gift shop, we headed out via the Airport on a school bus to the Wildlife area, where the buggies dock. At the airport we picked up a woman who is a professional nature photographer, with much of her work shown on PBS nature shows in the US and Canada.

On our trip we saw mostly Canadian and Snow Geese (those that haven't moved permanently to the Corporate lawns of New Jersey), Arctic hares and fox holes with fresh feathers lying around the holds from recent kills. However, near the end we spotted a polar bear and her

two cubs that were heading for a crossing of the trail we were riding. The cubs were large enough to be the previous year's litter, walking well back from the mother. When she heard our buggy, she went back and nudged them to a large lake, which they swam across, away from us.

On return, I had dinner at the Churchill Motel, where I met our engineer for that night to Gillam, Al Paziuk, and had a very pleasant conversation. Upon returning to the station, I found that a train departure is a social event for the locals, with a large crowd to see us off. A college group of campers from Minnesota were loading about 20 canoes into the baggage car, as the cars were equipped with racks. They had come down the Churchill River to the bay. We also watched the loading of the flat cars that had arrived that day, "circus style", backing trailers onto the cars from back to front and tying them down. These cars would be added to the train of empty grain cars, with the same power from today's arrival, that would follow and bypass us at Thompson Jct while we are up the branch. After the baggage work was done, the train was moved up so the sleepers were opposite the trailer station, and we boarded southbd train 692. I had a few drinks and got off to bed early, being tired from all that bouncing around the tundra that day. (I might add that the only day in the week you can connect with the *Canadian* in either direction is Sunday northward and Thursday southward without a hotel stay in Winnipeg.)



Day 6: Aug 1. This was a reverse of our northbd trip, without any wildlife, but at Thompson we dropped FP9 6313 and a coach. After we wyed out, I sat down and interviewed our Customer Service Manager, Yves St. Germain. My first question was "Were all five sleeping cars completed in the same manner?" His answer was "yes, so far." The fifth car had not yet entered service and was due in late August or early September, and he didn't expect any differences.

Secondly, "Are consist changes enroute pre-scheduled?" Yes, the normal train is one FP9, baggage, two coaches, diner and one or two sleepers, depending on departure dates; i.e., two on weekends and one midweek. A second FP9 and coach are added or dropped at Thompson in case of engine failure. The additional coach is for the locals using the train for shopping, etc., in the larger towns. The reason we got the second FP9 at The Pas northbd was a mechanical malfunction that could be repaired by a mobile crew from Winnipeg, there, after a rescue engine was forwarded, with minimum time lost.

I then asked, "Why did the sleepers run reversed from the direction of travel, which required sitting on the toilet cover to see forward?" It's a federal law that requires a vestibule for all the switching enroute. Also, one attendant can load passengers to both sleepers. (They need a rider car or caboose.)

After leaving the branch on the south leg of the wye, today's northbd was in a siding at Thicket Portage, waiting for us to pass, behind FP9Au #6304. In its consist was an open-deck office observation car, and the one sleeper was 2462, ex-"Silver Chasm", and the diner "Annapolis". Later that evening at The Pas we would pick up a Lynn Lake café/crew office/coach seating 72--#3248, built by CC&F in 1954, ex-CNR 5454, rebuilt in the early 80s for this service, for prescheduled maintenance in Winnipeg. We had an hour's wait here for a derailed freight car to be rerailed on the yard throat, so I took a walk around the downtown area before reboarding, and we did make up time overnight into Winnipeg.

Day 7: Aug 2. Dawn brought another beautiful day with a cool breeze blowing, so I sat under the trees at a table in the "Forks" complex to update notes for this story. Later, walking through the station, I noted the Winnipeg Rail Museum on the now-enclosed station tracks 1&2 was open, with a 60-cent admission fee.

My eastbd *Canadian* was posted as one hour late, so up to the museum. The star of the show is the "Countess of Dufferin" #1, a 4-4-0 built by Baldwin in Jan 1872 for the Northern Pacific, sold to CPR in 1897.

There was also a 1946 Packard automobile rail inspection car for the auto enthusiast. Most of the other equipment is in various stages of restoration, but they have a long way to go. They open a plywood door, about belt high, with a long step box for viewing trains in the station (a railfan's bleacher).

I waited for my eastbd train to arrive, and got a picture and the front-end consist. This time my car was next to the "Park" car in the rear section—8301 "Abbott Manor", again roomette 4 and a whole new view out of the south side of the train. After a walk through the train, I found it practically the same equipment as my westbd—F40 6449 replacing 6456 as the second unit, "Stuart Manor" replacing "Amherst Manor" and "Rogers Manor" dropped, so we are 21 cars eastbd. Apparently Vancouver Shop maintains the cars on these trains. We were only 10mins late into Sioux Lookout and 13 mins out, so it was cocktails, then dinner at the second seating at 8pm. We were not that full, so both seatings were out of Sioux Lookout. A few drinks and interesting conversations in the Mural lounge in the "Park" car and then off to bed.

Day 8: Aug 3. The next morning I awoke at Foleyet at 9am for a nice late breakfast after only a 10-min wait on a first come, first served basis. This was a first for me eastbd on the left side of the car with new views of the lakes in the Canadian Shield. We arrived in Capreol at noon. This is where in the pre-VIA days the CNR's Montreal sections of the *Super Continental* and *Continental* were separated from the Toronto sections and later at Sudbury Jct we crossed the CPR line, where just a few miles west the same separation was made for CPR's *Canadian* and *Dominion* trains. All these were daily in those days. It's surprising, as we skirted Parry Sound, how both roads' lines to Toronto were so close. I did note that both roads used common facilities for track inspectors. Their trucks were parked side by side. Wouldn't be surprised if they came up with an agreement to a joint shared service on their single-tracked lines.

As we ran through the Toronto suburbs on the Bala Sub, we passed an ONR set of cars that would not be used before Sunday, as there is no Saturday service on this line, and today's train had already left earlier.

Our arrival in Toronto was 45mins late so we didn't lose any more time today. My problem now was: what is the cheapest way to get to my hotel in Carleton Place near the airport, as I was unable to get reservations anywhere downtown due to a Caribbean Festival being held that weekend, and all hotels were sold out months before. No "Library" tonight. At the VIA information desk, I asked the clerk and she graciously called the hotel and I got directions: "Take the TTC subway downstairs for $1.50 in the Spadina direction and take a free transfer to a No. 60 bus at Lawrence-West Station, right to the door." So down I went, getting a transfer before boarding the train, and I was there in 45mins. At the hotel I arranged at the transportation desk for a cab to pick me up at 7am, as Lakeshore Drive was to be closed all day after 8am for the festival.

Day 9: Aug 4. The hotel, a Best Western, had a buffet breakfast included in your room rate, so I left my luggage at the desk for a quick bite and was on a 20-min ride via the expressways to the station. My train today would be corridor train 640 bound for Ottawa that starts from Oakville. To my surprise when I reached the platform, it was two trains combined, with our F40 in the middle, coupled to train 650 bound for Montreal. I was in the VIA1 car and we had three other coaches, all LRC, whereas 652's cars were 4000-series HEP-2 Budd coaches, all ex-Amtrak cars that were rebuilt with LRC-type interiors in 1995-6, and were led by an LRC locomotive, I discovered on one of the sharper curves leaving the station.

While waiting to leave the station, I noted today's *Canadian* with all the same cars as my inbound last night, plus private car 800333 "Silver Solarium", ex-Amtrak 9252/CB&Q #37 diner-lounge observation. On another track was this morning's inbound #51 *Enterprise* from Montreal with two "Chateau" sleepers besides the "Park" car.

As we proceeded east we went our separate ways. VIA1 includes a meal and beverages prepared in the car's gallery, with hot towels distributed before the meal. A "Grande Finale" for my trip on Heritage equipment with FP9s, LRCs and even F40s in the US probably close to the end of their life's work, and P42s on the horizon in both countries.

The family was waiting for me at Smiths Falls, so it was off to Perth for an outdoor lunch and some shopping before home at Bob's Lake.

ON THE COVER: VIA Rail Canada train 693, the *Hudson Bay*, pauses at The Pas, MB on July 31, 2001. Pulling the train is VIA engine 6313, an FP9AW, 1800-hp unit built by EMD in Mar 1985, with HEP generator added in 1997. Photo by Jim Langan. In this issue, Mr. Langan rides the *Hudson Bay* and *Canadian* and reports on his trip.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"...just pretend. You have a problem. You've blown through more than $5 billion in the last four years, with nothing much to show for it. You've just produced the worst financial results the Company ever had. Your bankers are appalled—they like the business you're in, but they hate the financial results you're getting. You've just had to admit publicly that basically you've been misleading the bankers and everyone else for four years. A special review committee has just filed a public condemnation of your regime and strongly recommended that your company be abolished, in favor of a radically new structure. Your strategic plan for the company has failed, and you've been forced to admit that, publicly, too. You have no backup plan. And, you understand that the management that similarly cooked the books and deceived the public at Enron is likely to be indicted for their efforts.

"So what do you do?

"...Well, George Warrington threatened to close the second part of the business. Shut it down cold. His strategy is to keep the part of the business that needs tens of billions in capital, loses $840 million a year, and has a load factor of about 40%, and close the part that needs and gets very little capital, loses less than a quarter of what the first part does, runs nearly full, and has a vast upside potential.

"What's wrong in this picture?"

—Editorial by MinnARP president Andrew C. Selden in Minnesota Association of Rail Passengers News, spring 2002 issue.

"Northern California: A mix of clouds and sunshine in the San Francisco Bay area. Mostly cloudy elsewhere. Showers in the northern highlands. Highs 55-65."

—Weather forecast in NY Times National Edition, Mar 12.

(Never been to those northern highlands! Does Amtrak travel there?)

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ON THE COVER: VIA Rail Canada train 693, the *Hudson Bay*, pauses at The Pas, MB on July 31, 2001. Pulling the train is VIA engine 6313, an FP9AW, 1800-hp unit built by EMD in Mar 1985, with HEP generator added in 1997. Photo by Jim Langan. In this issue, Mr. Langan rides the *Hudson Bay* and *Canadian* and reports on his trip.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"...just pretend. You have a problem. You've blown through more than $5 billion in the last four years, with nothing much to show for it. You've just produced the worst financial results the Company ever had. Your bankers are appalled—they like the business you're in, but they hate the financial results you're getting. You've just had to admit publicly that basically you've been misleading the bankers and everyone else for four years. A special review committee has just filed a public condemnation of your regime and strongly recommended that your company be abolished, in favor of a radically new structure. Your strategic plan for the company has failed, and you've been forced to admit that, publicly, too. You have no backup plan. And, you understand that the management that similarly cooked the books and deceived the public at Enron is likely to be indicted for their efforts.

"So what do you do?

"...Well, George Warrington threatened to close the second part of the business. Shut it down cold. His strategy is to keep the part of the business that needs tens of billions in capital, loses $840 million a year, and has a load factor of about 40%, and close the part that needs and gets very little capital, loses less than a quarter of what the first part does, runs nearly full, and has a vast upside potential.

"What's wrong in this picture?"

—Editorial by MinnARP president Andrew C. Selden in Minnesota Association of Rail Passengers News, spring 2002 issue.

"Northern California: A mix of clouds and sunshine in the San Francisco Bay area. Mostly cloudy elsewhere. Showers in the northern highlands. Highs 55-65."

—Weather forecast in NY Times National Edition, Mar 12.

(Never been to those northern highlands! Does Amtrak travel there?)

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